



MAY 15, 1954



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EXPLANATION OF CURRENT AGENDA—1954-1956

Item I: Support of U. S. trade policies that will help solve national and international economic problems.

This item reflects the League's conviction that the expansion of world trade is an important key to the solution of many economic and political problems both national and international. The means by which expanded world trade may be brought about will be the subject of concentrated League study and action.

Among the issues selected for special attention, the ones most familiar to the League through past study and action are the extension of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act and the establishment on a permanent basis of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the international agreement through which the reduction of trade barriers has largely been negotiated in recent years.

Less familiar questions to be explored are the repeal or modification of the Buy-American Act, the relation of U. S. agricultural policies to foreign trade (including the problems of farm surpluses and price supports) and the problem of possible injury to manufacturing and mining industries that must meet the competition of increased imports.

The League may eventually wish to consider other related problems. One of these is the expansion of trade through the increased flow of capital abroad. This raises such questions as the possibility of stimulating private foreign investment through tax incentives and fair treatment guarantees in commercial treaties, through public loans and grants by the U. S. Export-Import Bank, and possibly through the establishment of special U. N. agencies or mechanisms to furnish capital to countries that need it. Currency convertibility, customs simplification and problems of trade between communist and non-communist nations, are other issues that have an important bearing upon the expansion of world trade.

Legislative action will be taken on measures that further objectives on which there is clear League agreement. Community action will be designed to develop in every local community an understanding of the importance of expanded world trade, not only to the particular region, but also to the nation and the world as a whole. As part of this community effort local League surveys of the impact of foreign trade on individual communities will be undertaken as an effective way to develop citizen understanding, and at the same time to give concreteness and realism to the League's own consideration of the issues.

Item II: Development of understanding of the relationship between individual liberty and the public interest.

From its inception, the League has been involved in the free examination and exchange of ideas and with the fundamental role of "freedom of opinion" in a constitutional democracy. In this sense, the League has always been concerned with the essentials of "individual liberty" and their indispensable relationship to the "public interest."

However, in several ways, the current League undertaking in this field is new and different. Our awareness of our democratic heritage has been quickened by the need in recent years to redefine the basic freedoms of individual citizens as they relate to the necessary security of the nation as a whole.

Our most immediate challenge lies in the extension of wide citizen understanding. Our job will be accomplished as we succeed in developing each citizen's awareness of his basic heritage of individual freedoms and its relation to the present day world. Techniques which the League has been perfecting during the years, such as discussion based on facts, will be used.

At the same time, we will develop new techniques in order that local work may be carried out through cooperative projects in our communities. With other groups and individuals, Leagues will attempt to breathe new life and meaning into the familiar concepts found in the Bill of Rights: concepts affecting the relationship between the free citizen and his government, such as "due process of law," "searches and seizures," "to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation," "to be confronted with the witness against him," and "to have the assistance of counsel for his defense."

From such community activity, areas of increasing mutual agreement should emerge. Meanwhile, League members may reach conclusions in regard to possible legislative action. The rapid shift of emphasis in current developments may result in legislative action in areas other than those presently in the public mind.

As worded in the item, "individual liberty" refers especially to rights guaranteed to the individual under the Constitution and through judicial interpretations and implementing legislation. It would not include "civil rights" (i.e. rights denied to groups of citizens rather than to individuals) or immigration laws as applied to aliens. In addition to recognizing the importance of current national security needs, the phrase "the public interest" is intended to indicate the interdependence of self-government and individual liberty.

NATIONAL PROGRAM—1954-1956

(As adopted by the national Convention, Denver, Colorado, April 26-30, 1954)

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan organization, is dedicated to the principles of self-government established in the Constitution of the United States. The League works through its Voters Service and its Program to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government.

Voters Service is a year-round activity to help the individual citizen to be politically effective. It develops understanding of the essentials of individual liberty and representative government; it provides non-partisan factual information on candidates and issues; it increases citizen participation in political processes in the interest of responsible and responsive government.

CURRENT AGENDA

The Current Agenda consists of the governmental issues which the Convention has chosen for concerted action.

1. Support of U. S. trade policies that will help solve national and international economic problems (Principles 16 & 17).
2. Development of understanding of the relationship between individual liberty and the public interest (Principle 1).

PLATFORM: CONTINUING RESPONSIBILITIES

Continuing Responsibilities, a part of the Platform, consist of positions on national issues to which the League has given sustained attention and on which it may continue to take action.

1. U. S. support of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, including adequate financial contributions, increased use, and improved procedures (Principles 17 & 18).
2. U. S. support of measures designed to keep the peace through the United Nations and regional defense arrangements (Principle 17).
3. U. S. support of measures to promote international economic development and technical assistance (Principle 17).
4. Opposition to constitutional changes that would limit the existing powers of the Executive and the Congress over foreign relations (Principles 1 & 17).
5. Measures to improve the budgetary procedures of the Congress (Principle 5).
6. Opposition to constitutional limitation on tax rates (Principle 11).
7. Measures to counteract inflation or deflation (Principle 12).
8. Self-government for the District of Columbia (Principles 2 & 3); extension of national suffrage to the citizens of the District (Principle 2).

PLATFORM: PRINCIPLES

Platform Principles are the governmental principles supported by the League as a whole which give authority for the adoption of local, state and national current agendas.

1. The principles of representative government and individual liberty established in the Constitution of the United States.
2. A system of government which is responsible to the will of the people and which enables the voter to carry out his obligations as a citizen.
3. A system of government in which responsibility is clearly fixed.
4. A system of government which promotes coordination of the operations of federal, state and local governments.
5. Governmental organization and administration which contribute to economy and efficiency.
6. A merit system for the selection, retention and promotion of government personnel.
7. Legal protection of citizens in their right to vote.
8. A system of free public education which provides equal opportunity for all.
9. Protection of minority groups against discrimination.
10. Removal of legal and administrative discriminations against women.
11. A system of federal, state and local taxation which is flexible and equitable.
12. Fiscal and monetary policies that promote a stable and expanding economy.
13. Responsibility of government to share in the solution of social and economic problems which affect the general welfare.
14. Adequate financing of government functions and services.
15. Conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest.
16. Domestic policies which facilitate the solution of international problems.
17. Co-operation with other nations in solving international problems and promoting world peace.
18. Development of international organization and international law to achieve permanent means of cooperation.

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